

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
January 9, 2002**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on January 9th, 2002, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioners present were: Chris Marr, Ed Barnes, Aubrey Davis, Elmira Forner, George Kargianis, A. Michèle Maher and Connie Niva.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Maher, to approve the minutes of the December 19 and 20, 2002 Commission meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Chris Rose, Transportation Commission Administrator, described the changes to the structure of the fiscal year 2002 work plan. The revised plan has a simpler format, laying out the work in several major categories reflecting the current thinking regarding work schedules. A preliminary agenda for the months of February through July was also noted as being attached.

Mr. Rose announced that the Benchmark Committee and the Transportation & Economic Development Committee meetings would be held January 18, 2002 at the Wyndham Hotel at SeaTac. Mr. Rose gave an overview of the proposed topics of discussion for each meeting. The Transportation and Economic Development Committee will hear from the six regional administrators regarding specific kinds of transportation investments and programs that would make a difference in their regions' economies.

Mr. Rose announced that on Monday, January 14, 2002, the House Transportation Committee would be hearing legislation that would increase the Transportation Commission's responsibility by implementing some of the Blue Ribbon Commission reforms. The legislation would give the Transportation Commission the responsibility of adopting benchmarks for the transportation system and for certifying maintenance and preservation plans for all local governments except counties.

**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY REPORTS**

Secretary MacDonald introduced the presentation of awards to employees of WSDOT that merit special recognition. Dan Sunde, Director, Technology Transfer, Washington State Technology Transfer Center, Highways and Local Programs, described

the Mouse Trap Program and explained that Crystal Mouse Awards recognize WSDOT crews for their vision and initiative in developing needed field tools or equipment modifications. Mr. Sunde presented three Crystal Mouse Awards for the best developments of the year that improved traffic safety, improved efficiency and/or reduced costs for the department. Errol Rhode, Equipment Shop Supervisor, South Central Region, received a Crystal Mouse award for the best idea - his snowplow emergency light system; Charlie Jensen, Maintenance Tech II, Twisp Maintenance Shop, North Central Region received a Crystal Mouse Award for best tool – a snowplow bit changer which he developed; and Jerry Lowery, Maintenance Tech and John Morgan of the Tacoma Maintenance Shop received a Crystal Mouse Award for best equipment modification – a debris pusher which was invented by Mr. Lowery and fabricated by Mr. Morgan.

Toby Rickman recognized the traffic signal changing team for the conversion of traffic signals to LED (light emitting diode) systems, which will produce a reduction in power costs by 75 percent once the programmed is fully implemented. Kurt Schleichert, Ken Kilseimer, Ken Heale, Jim Newman, Wally Shauer and Mike Beck, Signals, Northwest Region, accepted the award.

Secretary MacDonald congratulated Casey McGill on his appointment as Assistant Regional Administrator, Maintenance Operations Engineer, South Central Region. John Conrad introduced Mr. McGill as the first person to come up through the maintenance ranks to the position, bringing with him impressive skills and the respect of his peers. Mr. McGill expressed gratitude to WSDOT personnel for the mentoring and assistance he received throughout his career that helped prepare him for the position. He stated that he is looking forward to the challenge.

Secretary MacDonald stated that the Department is strengthening its management team with the best possible use of the talents of WSDOT people and of those recruited. Secretary MacDonald explained the importance of the management changes. He introduced Mike Thorne as the new Director, Washington State Ferries (WSF). Commissioner Marr commended Terry McCarthy, Deputy Director, WSF, acting in capacity of Director for the past 15 months, on a job well done and presented him with a letter and gift. Mr. Thorne acknowledged the importance of Mr. McCarthy's assistance through his transition as the new Director. Looking forward to the challenge, Mr. Thorne's foremost objectives as the new Director will be to focus on essential customer service; to be mindful of the cost structure of the WSF; and to focus on efficiency and maximizing revenue potential. Commissioner Marr welcomed Mr. Thorne and expressed the Transportation Commission's support. Commissioner Barnes added his personal support of Mr. Thorne. Secretary MacDonald recognized Gary Baldwin, Acting Chief Operating Officer, and Director, Strategic Planning, Human Resources; Alice Tawresey's, Chair, Tariff Policy Committee, and the panel's contribution in the selection process.

Secretary MacDonald introduced John Sibold as the new Director of the Aviation Division, effective February 1, 2002 and recognized Judy Giniger's, Acting Director, Aviation Division, role in strengthening the Division and responding to the 9/11 crisis. Secretary MacDonald also thanked Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff and John Okamoto, Assistant Secretary, Northwest Washington Division, for their support of Ms. Giniger. Commissioner Marr welcomed Mr. Sibold to the Division and commented that Ms. Giniger has done well laying the groundwork for the Division.

Secretary MacDonald brought to the Commission's attention a notice, in the Highway Shopper, January 2, 2002, Vol. 27 No.1, of the Blue Ribbon Award for the World's Best Mountain Pass Highway Maintenance Team being awarded to the White Pass US Highway 12 Crew. Secretary MacDonald also passed out copies of Connie Niva's guest editorial published on the HeraldNet website dated January 9, 2002, describing the Transportation Commission functions; the need for additional financial resources and how the resources will be well spent. Secretary MacDonald asserted the importance of taking every opportunity to communicate transportation facts to the public.

John Conrad, Assistant Secretary, Engineering and Regional Operations, reported on the effects of recent winter storms on highways. Recent flooding and slides have resulted in costs in excess of \$2 million making the department eligible for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) emergency relief assistance.

#### **WSF REQUEST TO FILE CR 102 REGARDING TARIFF SCHEDULE**

Alice Tawresey, Chair, Tariff Policy Committee, presented a draft recommendation for the purpose of obtaining the Commission's authorization to take the draft to the public for their input. The committee will report on the public input with recommendations for changes. A public hearing will follow. In response to an inquiry from Commissioner Forner, Ms. Tawresey described their plan to hold public meetings in 12 ferry communities between February 20, 2002 and March 12, 2002 with a target date for the changes to be effective May 12, 2002. Commissioner Davis stated that it would be helpful for Commission members to attend the meetings on an informational basis.

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director, WSF, provided financial background information regarding the recommendation. The ferry system has been in transition since losing 20 percent of its operating funding a couple of years ago. The Joint Task Force on Ferries and the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation recommended an increase in ferry fares over a six year period to recover 80 percent of operating costs. Mr. Deardorf discussed fare revenue, state revenue and ridership forecasts. Mr. Deardorf explained the proposal by the Tariff Policy Committee for a 12.5 percent increase and Phase II implementation of the Tariff Route Equity restructuring. Ms. Tawresey

explained that the proposal is estimated to generate \$7.6 million in new fare revenue in FY 2003 and biennial revenues of \$217.6 million based on the State's model of ridership drop-off.

Ms. Tawresey provided an overview of the proposed fare restructuring. The San Juan Islands fares are the only fares requiring further Tariff Route Equity policy increases of 5 percent. Ms. Tawresey summarized the Committee recommendations to restructure Anacortes-San Juan Island fares to reflect day-of-week price differentials. Ms. Tawresey requested the Commission budget for the implementation of automated fare collection or smart card fare collection to increase efficiency. Commissioner Niva advocated the necessity of improving the technology of fare collection. The Committee proposes a monthly passenger pass as a better alternative to the coupon book that presently represents 60 percent of the income. The advantage of the one-point toll collection for Vashon passenger only fares is implementation will not produce any costs to the State. School groups will not be allowed to displace other passengers during peak hours. The Committee recommends reducing the discount for commercial frequent users with a goal of eliminating the commercial discounts in four years. This will spread the cost over all commercial users. Bicycle surcharges should be rounded to the nearest dollar and not adjusted in the future with general fare increases. The Committee recommends a fee of \$20 for both vanpools and carpools. Commissioner Kargianis requested that Mr. McCarthy keep the Commission apprised of the impact of carpools and vanpools displacing other vehicles. Commissioner Kargianis asked the public to keep in mind that the fare increases represents recovery of only a portion of the operating expenses.

***It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Maher, to approve the filing of CR 102, to modify the existing schedule of tariffs prior to February 20, 2002 and initiate a formal public outreach program regarding the ferry fares. The motion passed unanimously.***

## **TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE UPDATE**

Linea Laird, Assistant Regional Administrator informed the Commission a letter of agreement that was developed to position the agency to advance the project quickly once the Legislature chooses the direction and source of financing. Ms. Laird stated that the project is operating under the provisions of the developer's agreement. Ms. Laird walked the Commission through the bullets in the agreement letter. Ms. Laird showed an organization chart for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge project management structure. WSDOT will assume management services contractor responsibilities for the contract under construction. If a notice to proceed has not been received by July 2003, WSDOT will exercise their rights to terminate the contract.

Commissioner Forner inquired as to the costs for each of the changes mentioned in the letter of agreement. Ms. Laird replied that the costs would shift with the change in structure to WSDOT management of the project, but no additional costs are anticipated. Ms. Laird is willing to present an assessment of costs for WSDOT to take this approach, at a later date.

Ms. Laird described activities that are pertinent once direction is received from the Legislature. Proposed language changes and development of legal strategies of the design build contract and toll system supply will be required. Other activities include: formation of a policy support team for price negotiations; an appropriation requirements study; development of expenditure plans; right of way parcel purchases; and preparation for bond sales. The Commission will become involved as a toll setting authority.

### **PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD**

Meta Heller, representing Common Ground USA, announced that Thursday, January 10, 2002, the League of Women Voters would have a gathering regarding transportation with guest speakers Andrew Johnsen, Executive Policy Advisor, Office of Financial Administration, and Bill Laborde, Transportation Choices Coalition. Ms. Heller commented that the regionalism concept is a wonderful idea, especially if tied to property taxes since transportation increases property values.

Commissioner Marr introduced the topic of the Cottage School Daycare in Seattle. Lorena Eng, Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, explained the management considerations of the decision to give notice to the daycare that the Department would terminate the lease in September 2002. Commissioner Niva reported on the daycare parents meeting she attended. Commissioner Kargianis stated that a policy should be developed on daycare provisions for WSDOT employees. Ms. Eng stated that out of the 63 children that attended the daycare only 18 were WSDOT employees' children. Commissioner Kargianis requested a report of an analysis of the costs and benefits of the Cottage School Daycare space and suggested a solution be found to prevent similar situations in the future. Commissioner Davis agreed that a policy should be developed with consideration for funding involving partial payment from employers and employees. Commissioner Maher cautioned that daycare facilities involving employees and community members would create complications. Secretary MacDonald stated he would have statewide data collected regarding WSDOT's needs and other agencies' daycare provisions. Commissioner Forner stated that other agencies do not have daycare provisions for employees and that the issue at hand was much broader; involving utilization of space.

## **FINAL DRAFT 2003-2022 HIGHWAY SYSTEM PLAN**

Elizabeth Robbins, Director, Planning, Advocacy and Initiatives, stated the purpose of the presentation was to provide an overview of the 2003-2022 Highway System plan and to solicit comments. The draft to be presented at the February Transportation Commission meeting will include a list of requirements and solutions. Ms. Robbins reviewed the four policy areas that were addressed in October and gave a description of the core team working on the issues.

Greg Lippincott, Acting System Planning Branch Manager, gave an overview of the draft plan. Mr. Lippincott stated he expects the plan to be actively utilized. Commissioner Davis inquired how the team was handling the costs of urban corridors without clear costs, such as SR 520 and 405. Mr. Lippincott drew attention to the appendix stating major cost improvements include high and low range estimates based on best available information from planning or design estimate. An average of the high and low estimates are used in the project pages. In response to Commissioner Maher's question as to whether the numbers would change, Ms. Robbins stated the plan would be updated regularly, as will the Capital Improvements Program Management (CIPP). Commissioner Forner questioned the necessity of the various planning exercises that at times conflict, stating it would be more efficient to utilize and amend a base document like the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP). Commissioner Davis contended that the Highway System Plan is an element of the WTP that provides a long-term view of the highway system. Commissioner Kargianis stated that a layout of long-term requirements planning for future reference would be beneficial. Commissioner Maher stated that it is important to provide links or direction to further information regarding the CIPP.

## **CURRENT STATUS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S RAIL PROGRAM**

Ken Uznanski, Manager, Rail Office, introduced the four topics to be covered in the presentation. The first topic for discussion was federal funding opportunities of the rail passenger program and moving forward with the program's development. WSDOT is expecting receipt of a federal funding package in the near future. Mr. Uznanski stated a federal funding package is important to the success of the State's rail program, to WSDOT's rail plans and to work with WSDOT's partners, BNSF, Sound Transit and Amtrak. The High Speed Rail Investment Act is still up for consideration. The rail department is working on the first step of the Bush Administration Transportation Policy of providing State's wants and needs.

Stephen Anderson, Rail Services Manager, reported on short-haul intermodal rail service and the Washington Fruit Express. Mr. Anderson is a member of the oversight committee studying the viability of short-haul service. He stated that private enterprise in Washington State has been moving forward with short-haul intermodal service,

eliminating the need for a State study. Consideration of the transport of potatoes and onions on the Washington Fruit Express is making real progress. Amtrak receives approximately one half of the revenue on each Fruit Express shipment.

Ray Allred, Rail Freight Expert, Public Transportation and Rail Division, discussed the potential impacts of the Ritzville unit grain train elevator projected to be operational in March 2002. The barges have responded by cutting freight rates, creating a rate war. Mr. Allred predicted that product presently being trucked to Tri Cities will probably be intercepted at the Ritzville elevator, therefore, truck traffic should not increase significantly. Commissioner Kargianis inquired about the future of the grain train. Mr. Allred stated that the Department is working with the short lines to implement a rail to barge operation for short haul grain, which will help sustain the short lines as well. Stephen Anderson, Rail Services Manager, Public Transportation and Rail Division, stated that there is a high demand for grain train cars.

***It was moved by Commissioner Kargianis, and seconded by Commissioner Davis, to recommend to withdraw decision package 7N regarding the study of intermodal service and the demonstration project. The motion passed unanimously.***

Tim Schellberg, Legislative Advocate, Washington State Shortline Association, discussed the abandonment of rail lines since the 1970s and the financial impacts on highways regarding maintenance, congestion costs and economic development. The Legislature responded to the creation of the Washington State Shortline Association in 1999 by increasing the contribution to the Rail Assistance Account up to \$6 million from \$1 million. A report to the Transportation Commission showed that \$20 million per biennium is required to keep pace with keeping the shortlines functional. The Governor's budget proposal last year placed \$20 million into the revenue package, however, with the recalculated new revenue package, the shortlines would get \$7.3 million per year.

Dan Handa, Assistant Division Manager, Public Works, City of Tacoma, stated that the City's greatest need is access to capital for infrastructure improvements. Without rail improvements, shortline cannot function. To date, Tacoma Rail has restored 40 to 50 miles of line to good condition. Lines in south Pierce County, Lewis County, Thurston County and to Mt. Rainier require repair.

Ron Ernst, Marketing Director, Tacoma Rail Mountain Division, discussed the City's efforts to increase the economic vitality of the South Puget Sound area by offering rail freight services. The first goal is to increase freight revenues. The Division has 131 miles of track, which is mostly class 1 with some class 2. The Division assists potential customers in developing access to the rail system by assisting with building or leasing facilities. For example, the Division developed a public/private partnership with Spanaway Lumber by cooperatively building facilities to provide rail access. Mr. Ernst indicated that the long-term plan is to provide passenger service. Commissioner Forner inquired whether the shortlines had the potential for offering dinner trains or other

tourism opportunities. Mr. Ernst stated that track conditions would need to be improved, a customer base and unique marketing would be required, and once developed, the concept would need to be kept fresh.

Byron Cole, Ballard Terminal Railroad Company LLC, reported on the company's two privately owned shortlines. The company owns the track but not the land, and therefore, was unable to obtain financing to upgrade their infrastructure. The company was able to borrow \$350,000 from WSDOT to make track improvements.

### **ALASKAN WAY VIADUCT UPDATE**

Dave Dye, Urban Corridors Administrator, WSDOT Northwest Region, explained that the project is financed until June 2003. Design and right of way financing will be required for fiscal year 2004.

Maureen Sullivan, Urban Project Administrator, WSDOT Northwest Region, described the physical layout of the project. The schedule has not changed. The committee will meet with the leadership group on February 12, 2002 to decide which alternatives will be evaluated. Ms. Sullivan reminded the Commission that there is an urgency to replace the Viaduct due to: its seismic vulnerability; its obsolescence as a transportation facility; and its weak cost/benefit prospects for rehabilitation. The Viaduct carries \_ of the north-south traffic through Seattle; approximately 110,000 vehicles per day. It does not meet today's standards and failure of the aging seawall will cause the Viaduct to fail. The Committee has focused on engineering design and constructability issues, traffic needs, opportunities in the area, and coordination with other projects. Current committee actions include on-going outreach, fast track strategies, concurrent activities, early integration of urban design, environmental strategies, strengthening use of leadership group as a sounding board, developing alternatives, and creating transportation projections for future needs. Conceptual alternatives considered recently are aerial structures, cut and cover tunnels or bored or mined tunnels. Ms. Sullivan reminded the Commission that the seawall plays an important part in all the calculations.

Bob Chandler, Project Manager, City of Seattle, provided historical data and pictures of the seawall and Alaskan Way. Mr. Chandler stressed the structural vulnerability of the seawall and Alaskan Way and made their connection to the viaduct.

Tom Madden, WSDOT Engineering Manager, described four viable alternatives. Alternative A is completely aerial with some cut and cover tunnels. Alternative B is aerial with some cut and cover tunnel as well as a mined tunnel and a short stretch at-grade along Harbor Island. Boring machines do not provide the width required, therefore, it is more cost effective to use the mined tunnel method. Alternative C is aerial with some cut and cover south of Pike Place Market with a mined tunnel to the north. There is



essentially no overhead structure from the Portal area to the north end of the project. Alternative D is essentially cut and cover tunnel with approximately 200 feet of mined tunnel under the Seattle Science Center area. Commissioner Niva reiterated the urgency of the Vaduct project in light of the 110,000 daily users and commended the City of Seattle and WSDOT partnership for their work on the project.

Ms. Sullivan reported that attention is being given to environmental impact statement process streamlining. The project has been proposed as a highway of statewide significance, which will accelerate the process. The alternatives will be narrowed by February 2002 with the preliminary preferred alternative chosen in June 2002. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2005. The bulkhead project and the seawall present challenges in the permitting process. Concurrent preliminary engineering activities bring risks in addition to efficiencies and a need for greater collaboration with the city, state, environmental agencies, businesses, and communities. Since the project has not been defined, cost estimates have not been completed. The adjusted 01-03 budget would provide the financing needed to carry the project forward. The final funding package may include tolls or users fees. Additional funding is expected to come from the development of potential beneficiary partnerships. The project group will draft a financial plan for presentation at the March Commission meeting.

## **2003-2005 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION BUDGET DEVELOPMENT**

Secretary MacDonald asked that agenda item number 10 be deferred to a later date to provide time for further refinement of the presentation. Commissioner Marr commented on the deferral and stated that Chris Rose should discuss with Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, WSDOT, the budget schedule and the need for additional workshops.

## **GOVERNOR'S REFORM LEGISLATION**

Rick Smith, Director, Planning and Capital Program Management, WSDOT, introduced the topic. House Bill 2304, filed by Representative Ruth Fisher and Representative Fred Jarrett, combines several Blue Ribbon Commission bills from the 2001 legislative session into one bill. Mr. Smith distributed an analysis of the bill completed by himself and Charlie Howard, Director, Planning and Policy Office. Secretary MacDonald commented on the importance of the bill and provided an overview.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Howard described the bill provisions. The Commission is required to take the goals contained in the bill and develop performance measures. Mr. Howard discussed alternative delivery procedures for delivering projects. Additions to RCW 47.05 included in the provisions are: 1) requirement for WSDOT to develop analytical tools to use common methodology of costs and benefits for all modes; and 2) add "congestion relief" to the list of objectives of the priority programming system. A

fiscal note is being prepared regarding the development of analytical tools. Provisions update the RCW regarding prioritization of projects under the preservation program. The Department is given direction to develop transportation demand modeling tools as recommended by the BRCT and legislation. In congested corridors requiring in excess of \$100 million, the department is directed to conduct multi-modal corridor analysis. The Department is required to annually report to the Legislature the priority programming results.

## **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

Commissioner Maher reported that she attended a presentation of the light rail planning process in Spokane.

Commissioner Forner reported that she attended the Douglas/Chelan County Chamber of Commerce legislative group meeting regarding transportation funding.

Commissioner Davis reported that on invitation by Representative Helen Sommers, he participated in a meeting with the Democratic Leadership of the House and two engineers to discuss possible solutions for the Alaskan Way Viaduct problems. He proposed to David Dye that a meeting be arranged with WSDOT staff and the two engineers to discuss their proposed solutions.

Commissioner Niva reported that she attended the press conference introducing Mike Thorne at Coleman Dock on January 7, 2002. Mike Thorne's professionalism during the press conference indicated that he is a huge asset to WSDOT. Commissioner Niva handed out brochures on a new "urban corridor" planning effort by Snohomish County and the City of Everett named the Sno-Cap program.

Commissioner Barnes reported that the I-5 Partnership is developing and recommendations will be made to the Commission by June 2002. At the RTC meeting, January 8, 2002, BNSF and federal agencies, the US Army Corps of Engineers and Marine Fisheries, are looking at revamping the railroad bridge between the Portland and Vancouver Ports into a rail/truck bridge. Commissioner Barnes received a book of interest produced by Smith Barney on financing projects. The US Army Corps of Engineers is moving forward with environmental agreements for the Channel Deepening project.

Commissioner Kargianis reminded the Commission of his interest in the cost of improving the freight corridors and having trucks pay their fair share of the improvements. He will be working with WSDOT staff on a report of findings regarding costs of truck freight compared to revenue contributions.

Commissioner Marr reported that Chris Rose attended the Spokane Transit Authority Light Rail Project (STALR) briefing and met one-on-one with himself and Michele Maher. STALR is continuing to work on gaining funding from federal, state and local sources. Commissioner Marr suggested that Commissioner Davis along with Commissioner Niva and Commissioner Kargianis should continue for another term as representative and alternates to the Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m. on January 9, 2002.